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U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
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EPA Hurricane Maria Update for Wednesday, October 11th

WASHINGTON (October 11, 2017) — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to coordinate closely with federal, commonwealth, territory, and local partners as the Agency responds to the impact of Hurricane Maria. EPA is focused on environmental impacts and potential threats to human health as well as the safety of those in the affected areas. EPA is continuing to coordinate with local governments in Puerto Rico and the USVI to assess the conditions of drinking water, which includes sampling, analysis and lab support, and getting wastewater treatment systems up and running. EPA's missions also include oil and chemical spill response, oil and chemical facility assessments, and debris management.

There are reports of residents obtaining, or trying to obtain, drinking water from wells at hazardous waste "Superfund" sites in Puerto Rico. EPA advises against tampering with sealed and locked wells or drinking from these wells, as it may be dangerous to people's health.

EPA has collaborated with FEMA and the Department of Defense on a [video](#) documenting our drinking water assessment teams' work. The video shows EPA teams at sites in Caguas and Yabucoa, Puerto Rico that are without power and need generators to get up and running. EPA is working with FEMA and local municipalities to get the drinking water wells functioning.



EPA and partners assessing non-PRASA drinking water system, Cañabón, Puerto Rico. Photo courtesy of EPA.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, at the request of Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló and in consultation with U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Rick Perry, today waived certain parts of the Clean Air Act to allow for the continued use of heating oil and marine fuel designated for use in Emission Control Areas that exceed the 15 parts per million sulfur standard for mobile non-road generators and pumps used for emergency purposes in Puerto Rico. This waiver is effective immediately and will continue through October 30, 2017. Any non-ultra low sulfur diesel fuel authorized under this waiver and remaining in a mobile non-road generator or pump after October 30, 2017, may continue to be used until the fuel has been consumed.

Personnel

EPA continues to deploy personnel to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as conditions allow. As of October 10, 2017:

- About 236 personnel are currently involved in hurricane response efforts.
- About 48 personnel are on the ground in USVI to assist with response efforts.
- About 89 personnel are on the ground in Puerto Rico to assist with response efforts.

Debris Management

EPA continues to work with FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Puerto Rico and USVI governments on debris management. EPA will assist with the handling and disposal of orphan containers, household hazardous waste, medical waste and e-waste. EPA plans to conduct air monitoring at collection areas and during all hazardous materials operations.

Marine Operations

EPA is working with the US Coast Guard on marine operations to assess sunken vessels on the eastern coast of Puerto Rico and USVI. Teams will locate and evaluate the condition of sunken vessels and assist with the disposal of recovered oil and hazardous materials.

Assessment of Superfund Sites, Oil Sites and Regulated Facilities

EPA continues to re-assess Superfund sites, oil sites, and chemical facilities in both Puerto Rico and the USVI to determine if the sites were affected by Hurricane Maria and if there is a potential for contamination to cause off-site impacts.

Drinking Water and Wastewater Management

In USVI, EPA continues to coordinate drinking water sampling with the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Natural Resources. In Puerto Rico, the EPA continues to focus on assessing both drinking water and wastewater systems and continues to work closely with the government of Puerto Rico.

Water Safety

Raw sewage continues to be released into waterways and is expected to continue until repairs can be made and power is restored. Water contaminated with livestock waste, human sewage, chemicals, and other contaminants can lead to illness when used for drinking, bathing, and other hygiene activities. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people should not use the water from rivers, streams and coastal water to drink, bathe, wash, or to cook with unless first boiling this water for a minimum of one minute. If boiling the water is not possible, water may be disinfected with bleach. To learn more about making water safe in an emergency, go to CDC's [Making Water Safe in an Emergency](#) web page.

For information and updates, visit: www.epa.gov/hurricane-maria.

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